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INFORMATION REPORT

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DATE DISTR. 25 APR 81

SUBJECT Current Situation in Western Venezuela

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1. Officials of various oil companies and government and military establishments in the State of Zulia, Venezuela, expect no immediate strike in the western oil fields.
2. These well-informed individuals are inclined to look upon recent rumors of political unrest as popular reaction to the government's policy concerning the current labor negotiations. They feel that such rumors will continue until the new oil contract is signed. However, it is their belief that the chances of sporadic, small-scale disturbances or work stoppages will increase in proportion to the length of the delay in signing the new contract. They have expressed complete confidence in the ability of the government to crush any concerted effort on the part of dissident labor groups.
3. The Partido Comunista de Venezuela (PCV) is conducting an extensive campaign in support of labor's demands in western Venezuela, which is having some effect on the oil workers. Although the PCV is thought to lack the organizational ability to direct a damaging strike, nevertheless it has had some success in its sale of pro-contrato tickets, through which it is trying to raise a strike fund, in the signatures it has obtained in support of various Communist proposals, and in the placement of Communists on local discussion committees.
4. Unconfirmed reports of dissension in the top military commands of Tachira and Zulia have been received and attributed by the above-mentioned officials to the anxiety of the people. Reliable sources have found no evidence of a serious split between these outlying commands and the Junta of Government. These rumors also advance the idea that President German Suarez Flamerich may be replaced by someone of like stature, but that such a change in the Junta will be made without incident.

This document is hereby regraded to CONFIDENTIAL in accordance with the letter of 15 October 1978 from the Director of Central Intelligence to the Archivist of the United States.
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